

to lay plans to have her for his wife. He was divorced from his own wife and got Herodias to divorce herself from Philip. He then married her becoming guilty of double adultery and double incest. That is he married a woman while she had a living husband and while he had a living wife; and he married a brother's wife who was at the same time his own niece.

3. This entanglement in crime bore terrible fruit, and was the beginning of trouble that lasted to his death. Having tried to get John the Baptist, the great prophet of the day, to endorse his unlawful marriage, he failed; and he and his wife were rebuked for this and other crimes. They were angered. Herodias wanted him put to death at once; but Herod feared the people because John was popular, and he feared John himself because he was a righteous man. Hence he imprisoned him and kept him safe from her vengeance for a time. But there is no half way ground in sin. He ought to have set John free; but he did not: and Herodias watched her opportunity. The Devil always finds his opportunity with a compromising character. So it was in this case. At his birthday feast he became drunk with wine, with pride at being surrounded by his "Lords and high captains," and with sensual delight while gazing upon the voluptuous movements of an oriental dance. All this took away his reason, and involved him in a rash oath which lead him on to the murder of the prophet.

4. But his crimes did not stop here. He that will not hear the prophet will kill him, and he that will kill the prophet will kill the Lord of the prophet. So Herod capped the climax of his sin by consenting to the death of Christ.

II. Herod's character and its lessons.

1. Herod was not wholly bad. While he was selfish, ambitious, sensual, and cunning he was not entirely reprobate. He was not so bad at heart as was his wife.

(1.) He respected John for his righteous and holy character.

(2.) Though his preaching "perplexed" him, he still admired it and "heard him gladly."

(3.) He wanted to spare John and when he found he was caught he "was exceeding sorry."

(4) Still he was a sinner. He did not revere righteousness and holiness enough to make them his own; he did not love the teaching of the prophet enough to accept it, and he did not sorrow to repentance and reformation.

2. He was a moral coward. He was weak. Here was his great fault. He was easily influenced. He had his eye to much upon how things would look in the eyes of men. He did not ask what is duty and what is right but "what will they say about it." When he heard John, he was with him; when he heard the people he was with them; when he heard his lord's and captains, he was with them; and when he heard the voice of Herodias, he was with her. But as she was his wife, and as she was with him most and had the last word, and that word was a bad word, he was a bad man. How many are too much like Herod. They cannot stand to be laughed at. John could and hence the difference in the characters of the two men and our respect for them.

3. He had a troubled conscience.

(1.) This weakness of his, of always listening more to the voice of man than to the voice of God, so entangled his life in crime that it was a perpetual misery. First his unlawful marriage troubles him, then the imprisonment of the prophet, then the murder of the prophet, then the news of Christ. Crime once committed every thing reminds him of it and deepens it.

(2.) Illustrated.

Rousseau declared in old age that a sin of his youth gave him sleepless nights. Cataline had such bitter memories that he was startled at the least sound.

(3.) Herod had two opportunities for pardon and salvation one when he met John the other when he heard of Jesus; but he refused them both. How many here are now imitating him?

Strive not to do great deeds; but strive to be

Freed from thy stains of dark impurity:
The night must pass or ere the Morning Sun

Can fill the sky with glory wondrously.
That Being, then, who hath th' all-seeing eye,

Beneath whose gaze thy purest soul will lie,

In choosing men to do the greater deeds
Shall mark thee well; nor ever pass thee by.

Essays and Contributions.

I AM.

BY C. H. BALSBAUGH.
TO ESTHER L. DICKEY.

Beloved Fellow Worker: Being is a fact. I am. *What* am I? This is the point of destiny, when God announced His Primal Name to Moses, he not only claimed eternal Being, but absolute perfection. "*Before Abraham was I AM,*" was Christ's certification of Divinity, both as to Eternity and Holiness. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Rom. viii, 9. "He made Himself of no reputation took on Him the form of a servant, was found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself became obedient unto death even the death of the Cross." Philpp. ii: 5 8. This is a delineation of the behaviour of God as a man. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Gal. ii, 20. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you," John xv, 12. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the Brethren. 1 John iii; 16. God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom. v; 8. What awful, transcendent, thrilling meanings are thus revealed in the words, "I am." All the raptures of Heaven and all the horrors of Hell are adumbrated therein. A cup of cold water, a postage stamp, an extra sheet of paper, or the withholding of them, are revelations of character. When I opened your letter, and saw your love in the form so urgently needed, I repeated Psa. ciii; 1, 2. I can strongly emphasize the representations of Paul in Philpp. iv, 12. Sometimes abounding, not unfrequently at the uttermost extremity of nothing, that is, so far as facilities for my pen-ministry are concerned. Verse 19 serves for us all in every possible emergency. "In Christ dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," whether in the manger, or in the carpenter-shop, or in Gethsemane, or on the Cross. We cannot always have our wishes, but we always have God's will. Acts xvi 6, 7, 1 Peter iii, 17. God does not always reveal his reason for his dealing and discipline.